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ABSTRACT

A practicum addressed the significant difference between the reading comprehension levels of gifted students and their ability to demonstrate achieved levels on exams designed to measure these levels. Nineteen fifth-grade students participated in daily timed activities targeting reading comprehension, reading rate, attitudes towards test taking, and cognitive awareness of innate test taking strategies. Results indicated that the program was successful in improving the students' performance in the targeted areas. It is held that this plan could be used as part of a daily maintenance program with gifted and mainstream students. (Fourteen references and 5 appendixes--the Dade County Reading Comprehension Placement Test, Reading Drills Activities, a Strategy Use Questionnaire, Graphs for Plotting Reading Results, and a Time Frame--are attached.) (PRA)

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A RESEARCH STUDY TO AUGMENT READING COMPREHENSION OF GIFTED STUDENTS THROUGH INCREASED EXPOSURE TO TEST-TAKING METHODS AND STRATEGIES

by
KRISTA R. HERRERA

A Practicum Report
submitted to the faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

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The abstract of this report may be placed in a national database system for reference.

June, 1991

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Signed_____

Abstract

A Research Study to Augment Reading Comprehension of Gifted Students Through Increased Exposure to Test-Taking Methods and Strategies.
Herrera, Krista R., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement of Education.
Descriptors: Reading Comprehension vs. Performance/ Performance of Gifted Students in Testing Situations/Test Taking Skills/Test Taking Drills/ Reading Comprehension Practice in Preparing for Standardized Tests/

The significant difference between the reading comprehension levels of gifted students and their ability to demonstrate achieved levels on exams designed to measure these levels was addressed in this study. The program was successful in increasing demonstration of reading comprehension levels, rate of reading, improve overall attitude toward test taking, and augment student's cognitive awareness of innate strategies used during test taking sessions.

The students participated in daily timed activities targeting the above mentioned focal points. It is the intent of this researcher to suggest use of the plan as part of a daily maintenance program with gifted and mainstream students.

Appendices include: Dade County Reading Comprehension Placement Test, Reading Drills Activities, Strategy Use Questionnaire, Graphs for Plotting Reading Results and a Time Frame.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Becoming a "Nation of Readers" is the goal as we enter the 21st century. Indeed, as a nation and as a group of practicing professionals, we must encourage and enlighten our students to the possibilities available to them when they are able to access information and decode and apply that knowledge.

The researcher acts as a gifted facilitator in an elementary home based gifted program, which is part of a larger International Studies Magnet Program. Students attending this International Studies Magnet program, are a group of highly motivated students who are bused in from local feeder pattern schools. These students have been interviewed and chosen to attend this school based on their desire and proficiency to learn a second language, and their ability to meet entrance requirements. These requirements include a grade point average not lower than 2.0, conduct grades that indicate "good, or "excellent" behavior, and the most critical criterion being the oral interview of the potential

student. In conjunction with these requirements, the recruiters look for parents who take an active role in the education of their children.

The magnet program is housed inside of a middle school and at the end of four expansion years will serve grades K-8. Languages of emphasis will include Spanish, French, and German. Required maintenance of ethnic ratios as established by Magnet School Programs, will be met. These requirements are 70% white, and 30% black.

The students who attend the magnet are required to attend an extra hour each day to fulfill the foreign language component. They receive two hours each day of foreign language instruction, a two hour language arts block, and two hours of content and global education instruction.

Problem Statement

Reading, for the majority of Gifted students, is a means to an end. It is how they are able to further research and investigate their individual areas of interest. Research indicates (Wingenbach, 1982), that

> "gifted readers are those gifted students who have been identified as successful comprehenders. These students' scores on

reading comprehension tests are two or more grade levels above their chronological grade level peers."

A large percentage of these students do not need extrinsic motivation to read. They choose to read because they understand the power of the written word. This innate love of reading should therefore increase their ability to read, comprehend, and strengthen their word power. However, herein lies the problem. After close examination of standardized test scores, and results of individualized reading inventories, there is a significant discrepancy between the gifted students' reading levels, and their ability to demonstrate these levels on standardized exams designed to measure reading comprehension levels.

The researcher closely examined the target population to ascertain the performance patterns. Of 19 fifth grade students identified, the following trends were noted: 25 percent of standardized test scores increased, 25 percent remained unchanged, while 50 percent saw a decrease by at least 1 stanine point. Conversely, students' performance on individualized reading inventories indicated at least a one year growth

in the area of comprehension. It is this performance gap that indicates a problem in terms of what is, and what should be happening on standardized tests measuring comprehension level.

The cause for these discrepancies may be varied. It is the opinion of the researcher that the causes are a combination of factors when referring to the gifted student and performance. These include: inadequate student preparation for achievement tests in the areas of drill, practice, and strategy use techniques, and students' attitudes and levels of confidence going into testing situations.

Outcome Objectives

According to Kavale, as quoted by Wingenbach (1982),

> specific strategies have been identified as used by good readers in the process of attaining comprehension. The following strategies are example of those identified: word-related strategies such as use of context, synonym substitution, or stated failure to understand a word; clause related strategies such as rereading, addition of information, or hypothesis; indirect text-related strategies such as personal identification, imagery, or generalization to own experience.

It is the belief of this researcher that if gifted learners struggling with reading comprehension test

performance are able to select and employ the appropriate strategies as needed in order to understand the meaning of a passage, that these learners will be able to raise their comprehension scores to a level more indicative of their true comprehension ability.

Therefore, by creating a program whereby the gifted student is exposed to the aforementioned strategies in conjunction with test-taking strategies to be presented, the following outcome objectives will be obtained:

1. After participation in the 12 week Peak Performance in Reading Comprehension (PPIRC) program, 75 percent of the targeted fifth grade students will improve their performance by 25 percent on the Dade County Reading Comprehension Placement Test (see Appendix A).

2. After participating in the 12 week PPIRC program, 25 percent of the targeted fifth grade students will demonstrate a 25 percent increase in speed and accuracy in reading using a Timed Reading series (see Appendix B).

3. After participating in the 12 week PPIRC program, 100 percent of the targeted fifth grade students will exhibit a positive attitudinal change towards test taking as observed by the researcher.

4. After participating in the 12 week PPIRC program 100 percent of the targeted fifth grade students will demonstrate a five point increase in cognitive awareness of prior self employed test taking strategies as measured by the results on a Strategy Use Questionnaire (see Appendix C).

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

The facilitator providing gifted education through the Languages Arts component is faced with the enormous task of providing an innovative, "differentiated curriculum which denotes higher cognitive concepts and process" (Polette, 1982); covering, yet camouflaging required basic skills, addressing the individualized nature and needs of the gifted student, and adequately preparing students for standardized achievement tests that they will encounter throughout their school careers. It is the result of these standardized tests that pave the way for middle and high school advanced placement programs and ultimately acceptance into institutions of higher learning. It is therefore vital that professional educators who deal with students during the vital elementary years, create a reading program which develops reading skills, habits, and attitudes, rather then leaving them to chance. (Hilton, 1974). In order to provide students with the most effective reading programs, and to enable them to accurately demonstrate attained reading comprehension levels, it is important

to discuss what is meant by reading comprehension, and test taking strategies. It is equally important to look at the research available in those areas, and to include a discussion about the strategies used by those students identified as "gifted readers."

Reading research literature, according to Levy as cited by Wingenbach (1984), defines reading comprehension as an interactive process drawing upon sources within the reader as well as within the printed message. In other words, comprehension occurs when students' perceptions of a selection and the writer's intent are one. (Scruggs 1988) A reading strategy is a purposeful way to comprehend the author's intent. Research indicates that strategies used by those identified as gifted readers occur without specific instruction or practice. Therefore a study of these strategies and those cited in current research should best equip readers struggling with the ability to demonstrate their comprehension on a standardized test, the skills and confidence to perform at a more reliable level.

After a review of the research, discussion with professionals in the field, and surveying students on what they themselves want in the area of reading for test

taking, a number of techniques, strategies, and considerations have surfaced as the most effective way to raise comprehension levels and standardized test scores. These include: comprehension strategies, classroom setting for the gifted child, reading question first then the passage, cloze procedures, content reading in conjunction with drill and practice sessions, and training in speed reading techniques. Particular attention was paid to the review of literature regarding comprehension strategies of gifted readers and strategies used on reading achievement tests. These particular excerpts are relevant to the gifted readers control and use of the reading process in order to attain the goal of comprehension. First a discussion on comprehension and the gifted student.

> According to a study by Wingenbach (1982),
>
> gifted readers control and use the reading process in order to attain the goal of comprehension. This cognitive control or monitoring of comprehension process inclusive of the selection and use of strategies is known as metacognition.

Gifted readers are able to comprehend and employ appropriate strategies to understand the writer's meaning. Further study indicated that gifted readers

know when they are failing to understand and most often will reread a passage to regain control of the process, while use of context was the most frequent method used for identifying unknown words. These readers also continue to monitor and adjust their comprehension thereby controlling and self-evaluating their success. Other techniques include: synonym substitution when the student is better able to grasp the meaning of a passage by replacing a word with another word that they are more familiar with ie. "another" for "additional"; reference to information contained within a passage to help clarify a sentence; and identification whereby the reader is able to personally identify with the information contained in a passage.

The results of the Wingenbach study show that gifted readers are metacognitively aware of the reading process. This awareness allows them to select appropriate techniques and strategies to control reading comprehension. As stated by Wingenbach (1982)

> it is the knowledge of the gifted reader's use of comprehension strategies and metacognitive awareness that is directly transferable to any analysis of reading behavior. The reading behavior of a student can be analyzed in terms of those comprehension strategies employed and the extent of metacognitive awareness exercised

in monitoring, controlling, and evaluating comprehension success.

This researcher is of the belief that by interviewing students targeted for the PPIRC program to determine use of metacognition and strategies discussed in the Wingenbach study, the researcher can not only identify deficiencies in these readers, but educate them in the use of the strategies used by gifted readers.

According to Robinson, "because reading is at the heart of the curriculum, this subject has been of special concern as it relates to the specific needs of gifted students," (1984, pg. 14) Therefore, the facilitator in a program where gifted goals and objectives must be delivered through the language arts component must pay close attention to the classroom setting and the expressed needs of the gifted students themselves.

Help in speed, comprehension, and adapting reading techniques to different types of passages are the areas in which gifted students want emphasized by the teacher (Robinson 1984). An environment rich in activities stressing higher level comprehension thinking skills such as: finding main idea determining implications, summarizing, drawing conclusions and critical evaluation,

in conjunction with practice in adjusting reading rates to material and purpose of reading, using content passages as practice, and locating information from a variety of sources, should improve comprehension levels and enable students to accurately demonstrate those levels. Skillful presentation and frequent variations of these strategies should maintain the interest of the gifted student who tire quickly with activities seen as unnecessary and redundant.

The usefulness of "reading the passage first," on standardized multiple choice test is a technique of controversy. A study performed by Perlman in 1988 indicated that this technique was mainly useful in answering questions on the lower end of Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking. It also emphasized that this technique could be an obstacle when responding to inference based questions.

This information is of interest to the researcher because of the emphasis on higher level thinking skills in gifted programs. While constantly using higher level questioning to foster higher level thinking, is it possible that the gifted student is at a disadvantage when asked to perform lower level thinking activities?

It is the researchers belief that these students are asked to look beyond the obvious in most of their activities and find it difficult to see the obvious as it relates to comprehension on multiple choice achievement tests. Therefore, using the "read the question first" format in drill and practice sessions, would provide these learners with the ability to focus on factual based questions while still using strong critical thinking skills when called for.

Traditionally, comprehension is assessed by answering questions after the completion of a specified passage. The cloze procedure offers the reader the chance to demonstrate comprehension of a passage as that interactive process is actually taking place. According to Rankin as quoted by Pehrsson (1982), "...cloze test results correlated in the .70-.90 range with standardized tests." However, according to research by Pehrsson and others indicate the cloze procedure may not measure global understanding. Pehrsson's research indicates that the cloze procedure my be closely related to the students ability to use linguistic inference based on syntactic and local semantic cues.

Taking Pehrsson's results into consideration, this researcher contends that the use of cloze procedures in conjunction with other methods of drill and practice to prepare for achievement test in reading is valuable. This researcher believes by coupling this procedure with content area selections as the focus, will further prepare students to be successful when performing on reading comprehension achievement tests.

Finally, interviews conducted by the researcher, with professionals in gifted education and reading education, indicate an overwhelming need for drill and practice using the format of the standardized achievement tests and practice in modifying speed depending upon the selection to be read. This would appear to go against the premise of gifted education for providing a differentiated curriculum and educational environment. However, the reality remains that achievement tests are a part of education today and as we enter the 21st century. Educators of gifted students would do a disservice to their students by not including these components in their program.

It is the intent of this researcher to capitalize on the information reviewed to increase achievement on

standardized tests and increase students' confidence levels as they face these annual assessments.

CHAPTER III

Method

Resources

The Peak Performance in Reading Comprehension Program (PPIRC) was implemented over a twelve week period. During the implementation, the 19 targeted fifth grade students met with the researcher for a two hour language arts block. These practice sessions took place in the Gifted Center and occurred at the same time each day during the program. The gifted center was a unique facility in that two facilitators and the researcher were conducting classes in individually partitioned areas.

Upon arrival to the center each day, fellow facilitators provided their students with silent sustained reading time to afford the researcher the conditions necessary for timed practice sessions. During this specified time the students were trained to retrieve their PPIRC program folders from their individually chosen locations. The students participating quickly became conditioned to the sessions and were observed to not only count on them, but to look forward to them.

Design

The PPIRC program was designed as a twelve week program with 58 five to twenty minute practice sessions devoted to drill and practice sessions which focused on techniques and strategies to raise reading achievement test scores. Although the researcher followed a policy of strict adherence to the projected time frame (see Appendix D), an occasional four day week, school activity, field trip, or assembly, caused unavoidable interruptions. When those inaccuracies occurred, the program was simply continued during the following session as outlined.

The implementation of the PPIRC program was designed to allow students to become successful in the use of speed reading techniques, reading for content, the use of test taking strategies, practice with actual comprehension type test questions following a content dense passage, practice in accurately transferring answers to computerized sheets, and writing and answering both higher and lower level test questions.

The PPIRC program was a non-graded activity, however, the students monitored their own progress on a daily basis using student answer keys which allowed for

instant feedback in the areas of accuracy, speed, and increased reading levels. Each session was followed up by plotting results on a progress graph (see Appendix E). The researcher noted that this was viewed as positive by the students and gave them an unexpected integrated math lesson in the plotting of graphs.

Community Resources

During the duration of the PPIRC program, the researcher was offered a reading incentive program from a well known business in the community. While not having a direct impact on the PPIRC program, it did afford the researcher with positive reinforcement of daily reading. Students were encouraged to read and have the researcher sign off on a predesigned bookmark each time a book was completed. When the student had successfully completed five books, the participating business gave the student a free dairy product in a waffle cone.

Training

The researcher spent approximately four hours attending inservice training in the areas of using the Whole Language Approach to teaching reading, techniques of skimming and scanning, use of speed reading, and

utilizing the newspaper as part of a reading program. Although these inservice sessions proved to be informative in nature and offered further evidence for the use of these techniques and strategies as a component in any meaningful reading program, they did not provide for insight into novel approaches that were applicable to the PPIRC program.

Monitoring

The monitoring process was ongoing by the students, researcher, practicum observer, and advisor. This monitoring team provided foremost ideas, observations, and suggested modifications to allow the practicum to proceed uninterrupted. The researcher maintained a journal of observable attitudinal changes of the targeted group of students. Daily practice occurred with immediate results noted by the students. Each session was followed-up with a brief explanation of modifications needed to be more successful, depending upon what students had experienced in terms of positive or negative results during each session. For example; after completing a speed reading drill, a student had a drastic increase in reading rate, coupled with a equally

drastic decrease in comprehension. The researcher provided time for an open discission on how the student could experience a more successful result, ie. slowing rate to allow for increased comprehension. These follow up discussions were held on a purely voluntary basis.

Evaluation

According to Dumas, "evaluation refers to a full examination of the degree to which the specified outcome objectives have been achieved" (1988, pg. 51). To begin the PPIRC program, the researcher administered a criterion referenced comprehension placement test to assess comprehension levels. This instrument also served as the posttest to use for comparison purposes at the culmination of the program.

Initial reading rates were also documented on the all speed reading exercises. The first and final rates were used to determine base line and ending rates. In both instances data was collected and analyzed and can be found in table 2, page 25.

A pre and post Strategy Use Questionnaire was given to the students. After answering the questions, students were asked to rate themselves from one to ten, based on

their answers, on how cognitively aware they were of strategies used when faced with a test to determine comprehension levels. In all of the targeted areas, pre- and posttest scores and ratings were compared to discover if objectives were met.

The first objectives would if the targeted students increased reading comprehension by 25 percent. The second objective would be met if target students increased reading rates by 25 percent, while objective four would show positive results by having a five point increase in cognitive awareness of Strategy Use. The third objective was met if the researcher observed a 100 percent increase in positive attitude change towards test taking by the target population.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this chapter was to evaluate the results of the PPIRC program and discuss the findings. The PPIRC program was implemented in the Spring of the 1991 academic school year to determine if participation in the PPIRC program could positively affect reading comprehension performance levels of gifted students. The first objective was not met by a twenty-five percent increase in reading comprehension scores, however, in all but five instances, students comprehension scores increase by between 2 to 10 percent. Of the five students who did not demonstrate an increase in reading comprehension levels, students J, M, and N, showed no change in pre/post test scores, while students I and S saw a five and six percent decrease respectively. These results may be seen in Table 1 on page 23.

The following comments clarify the analysis of the test results. While the researcher's choice of the Dade County Comprehension Placement Test was an adequate instrument, the researcher may have overlooked a more precise tool for use with gifted students. A better tool

Table 1

A Comparison of Pre- and Posttest Scores for Individual Students on the Dade County Reading Comprehension Placement Test

Subject	Pretest*	Posttest*	% of Change
A	85%	92%	7% Increase
B	87%	90%	3% Increase
C	85%	94%	9% Increase
D	85%	94%	9% Increase
E	90%	92%	2% Increase
F	88%	94%	6% Increase
G	92%	98%	6% Increase
H	94%	98%	2% Increase
I	94%	88%	**6% Decrease**
J	88%	88%	No Change
K	81%	87%	6% Increase
L	90%	100%	10% Increase
M	87%	87%	No Change
N	94%	94%	No Change
O	83%	92%	9% Increase
P	90%	94%	4% Increase
Q	90%	94%	4% Increase
R	94%	98%	4% Increase
S	92%	87%	**5% Decrease**

* Percentage Correct

for assessment would have provided a clearer picture of projected growth.

In the case of Subject M and S, it was noted that these students skipped items on the posttest which could provide an explanation of the lack of growth in the first case and the decrease in the second.

The researcher also believes that the timing of the procedures themselves may not have been conducive to optimal performance. The targeted population had just completed the Stanford Achievement test, a school wide Critical Thinking posttest, a school wide Whole Language post test, and notification of final examination test dates. It is this researchers belief that the targeted students were at such a level of test saturation, that it interfered with the results of any test being administered.

Objective number two was met when 25 percent of the targeted fifth grade students demonstrated a 25 percent increase in reading rate during drill and practice sessions. Refer to table 2, page 25, for clarification. It was noted by the researcher that more than 50 percent of the targeted students not only increased their reading rates, they also increased their comprehension levels and

Table 2

A Comparison of Student Pre- and Posttest Scores On Timed Reading Drills

Subject	Pre Rate*	Post Rate*	Pre Score*	Post Score*	Pre WPM*	Post WPM*
A	1:30	:40	50%	40%	265	600
B	1:40	:35	70%	100%	240	800
C	1:30	:50	50%	70%	265	440
D	:45	:55	60%	90%	600	480
E	:50	1:25	40%	70%	480	265
F	2:30	:45	70%	80%	160	550
G	1:00	1:00	80%	60%	400	400
H	1:30	:35	50%	70%	265	700
I	2:10	:40	80%	100%	175	600
J	1:40	:40	70%	100%	240	600
K	1:00	:50	100%	100%	400	480
L	2:00	:30	90%	20%	200	800
M	1:30	:40	80%	100%	265	600
N	2:30	:40	70%	30%	160	600
O	2:00	:35	60%	90%	200	800
P	1:30	1:15	80%	100%	265	345
Q	1:00	:05	70%	90%	400	2400
R	1:30	1:20	70%	80%	265	230
S	1:40	:40	50%	90%	250	600

* Rate = Speed
Score = Percentage Correct on Comprehension Questions
WPM = Words Per Minute Read

"words per minutes" read. In the case of student Q, a 55 second increase in speed was observed, with a 20 percent increase in comprehension level. This student experienced 2000 words per minute increase over the duration of the practicum. Table 2 on page 25 summarizes these results.

Objective number three was met when 100 percent of the targeted students showed a positive attitudinal change towards test taking as observed by the researcher.

The final objective concerned students cognitive awareness of strategies used during test taking. After analysis of the pre and post test surveys, the following trends were indicated; thirteen of the targeted students indicated an increase of five or more points on the rating scale, while six of the students indicated at least a three to four point increase. A summary may be found on Table 3, page 27. Although these figures indicate less than 100 percent of the students showing a five point increase in awareness, in all 19 cases, increases were indicated.

In conclusion all of the objectives outlined in the study were met; students improved performance on reading comprehension test, increased reading rates, showed

Table 3

A Comparison of Student Self-Rating
On A Stragegy Use Questionaire

Subject	Pre-Strategy Awareness	Post-Strategy Awareness	Point Variance
A	1	7	6
B	2	5	3
C	1	6	5
D	3	8	5
E	2	8	6
F	5	10	5
G	2	5	3
H	3	10	7
I	2	6	4
J	2	5	3
K	3	9	6
L	3	10	7
M	4	10	6
N	1	4	3
O	1	10	9
P	2	10	8
Q	6	10	4
R	4	10	6
S	2	7	5

improved attitudes toward test taking, and improved their cognitive awareness of individual strategies employed during test taking. The most significant and promising change, was the improvement in students attitudes and confidence towards test taking.

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

The researcher feels that although the PPIRC program provided positive changes in performance, cognitive awareness levels, and attitudinal changes, that the real test of the study will be if the students maintain these new skills. Therefore, it was felt that this program could be replicated as a viable component of a reading program, be it with gifted or mainstream students.

The PPIRC program adequately provides for time efficient sessions concentrating on comprehension as well as higher order thinking skills. It gives instant feedback and follow-up which reinforces each successful session. The program enhances students awareness of themselves as part of and interactive process.

The researchers final recommendations for the duplication of this study are to initiate the PPIRC program at the beginning of the school year, and sustain it through the year as part of a daily maintenance program. It is also believed that an additional computer component would enhance the results of the program.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Directions: On your desk you should have a story booklet and an answer sheet. You can see that there is a box on the answer sheet for each page in your booklet.

Read each story carefully. Then read the questions below. On your answer sheet put an "X" on the letter of your answer.

Some stories will be easy and some will be hard. Do your best; but stop if the stories are too hard for you.

Level: PP

Mark has two cars.

One is red. One is blue.

Dan has one big car.

"Come to my house," said Mark.

"We can play cars."

"I can play," said Dan.

(D) 1. _____ has a blue car.

[A] Father [B] Mark [C] Mother

(V) 2. A house is a _____.

[A] home [B] play [C] car

(I) 3. Dan will _____ with Mark.

[A] run [B] walk [C] play

(G) 4. Mark _____ Dan.

[A] stops [B] finds [C] likes

(I) 5. Mark and Dan want to _____.

[A] play ball [B] play cars [C] see the house

"Oh my!" said Jan.

"What is it?" said Ray.

"I saw something," said Jan.

"It was little.

It was brown and white.

It ran under the big house."

(D) 1. The house was _____.

[A] big [B] little [C] something

(V) 2. Jan saw something _____.

[A] funny [B] small [C] big

(I) 3. Jan was _____.

[A] sad [B] a doll [C] surprised

(G) 4. Jan saw a _____.

[A] car [B] kitten [C] ball

(I) 5. Ray did not _____ something little.

[A] play with [B] like [C] see

LEVEL: 1

The monkey was not happy.
He did not know where he was.
He could not find his friends.
It began to rain.
He was very cold.
"I must find a way to get home," he said.

(D) 1. The monkey wanted to go _____.

[A] eat [B] out [C] home

(V) 2. The animal in the story was _____.

[A] sad [B] happy [C] old

(I) 3. It was a _____ day.

[A] happy [B] sunny [C] cold

(G) 4. The monkey was _____.

[A] lost [B] pretty [C] little

(I) 5. The monkey got _____.

[A] candy [B] wet [C] friends

(G) 6. The monkey was _____.

[A] in the street [B] in the house
[C] in the store

LEVEL: 2

It was a great day.
All the children were working.
Bob and Jeff made a fire while Rosa
and her big sister made lunch.
Even little Don wanted to help.
He was trying to put the basket on the table.
You can always find Don near the food.

(D) 1. In the story there are _____ girls.
[A] two [B] five [C] three

(V) 2. Always means _____.
[A] sometimes [B] all the time [C] all the ways

(I) 3. Don liked to _____.
[A] help his mother [B] eat
[C] make the fire

(G) 4. Everyone was very _____.
[A] busy [B] sad [C] little

(G) 5. The children were at a _____.
[A] circus [B] show [C] picnic

(I) 6. There was _____ in the basket.
[A] food [B] a fire [C] a puppy

LEVEL: 3

Jay got in the elevator and pressed the button marked "12." The gift that he was holding was heavy. But he didn't mind because he was almost there. He could hardly wait! It was a very special day. Bill's Uncle Earl would be there and he was Jay's favorite football player.

"Why is this thing going so slowly?" Jay said to himself.

How he wished that he was there already. This was the longest ride Jay had ever taken.

(D) 1. The elevator was _____ for Jay.

[A] too fast [B] too slow [C] just right [D] down

(V) 2. The word **pressed** in this story means _____.

[A] ironed [B] drove [C] pushed [D] flat

(I) 3. Jay was going to _____.

[A] a party [B] play football
[C] the store [D] see a game

(G) 4. Jay was very _____.

[A] scared [B] upset [C] mad [D] excited

(V) 5. The word **gift** in the story means _____.

[A] give [B] present [C] party [D] special

(I) 6. **Quickly** is to **slowly** as **run** is to _____.

[A] walk [B] fast [C] skip [D] trot

(D) 7. The present was _____.

[A] a football [B] for Jay [C] nice [D] heavy

LEVEL: 4

King was almost always a quiet dog, but something had caused him to act strangely. First he gave a loud yelp. Then he hurriedly ran from the den into the living room. Cliff and Pam were watching a show on T.V. They turned quickly to see their huge dog. there he was stretched out, full length, under a small table next to them. Imagine how silly he looked trying to fit his big body under that tiny table.

(D) 1. The dog ran to the living room _____ he barked.

[A] after [B] as [C] while [D] before

(V) 2. Another word for **huge** is _____.

[A] angry [B] silly [C] frightened [D] large

(I) 3. The children were watching television in the _____.

[A] bedroom [B] living room
[C] den [D] playroom

(G) 4. The story is about _____.

[A] a television program [B] a scared dog
[C] Cliff and Pam [D] a king

(I) 5. **Under** is to **below** as **above** is to _____.

[A] low [B] tall [C] beneath [D] over

(I) 6. King was probably _____.

[A] very happy [B] watching
[C] very frightened [D] playing a game

(V) 7. A yelp is a _____.

[A] look [B] bark [C] purr [D] collar

LEVEL: 5

You might think that the giraffe's long neck causes him all sorts of trouble. Yet, his long, swan-like neck has many uses. It permits him to eat leaves high in the trees beyond the reach of other ground-dwellers. Since his neck serves as a sort of lookout tower, it helps him to spot his enemies. The giraffe can also raise himself from a lying position to his knees by pushing his neck forward. Then he pushes his neck one more to stand up. Once he is up, the movement of his neck is needed for balance and speed. When the giraffe runs he looks like a "rocking horse."

(D) 1. The giraffe's neck helps him _____.

[A] stand up [B] sleep [C] speak [D] think

(V) 2. The word **permits** in this story means _____.

[A] permission [B] stops [C] allows [D] agrees

(I) 3. The giraffe seems to be a _____ animal.

[A] clumsy [B] graceful [C] smart [D] troublesome

(G) 4. The paragraph is mainly about the giraffe's _____.

[A] neck [B] eating habits
[C] size [D] enemies

(I) 5. **Giraffe** is to **animal** as **palm** is to _____.

[A] coconut [B] Florida [C] leaves [D] tree

(V) 6. The word **beyond** in this story means _____.

[A] wider than [B] lower than [C] far above [D] far below

(D) 7. A giraffe often eats _____.

[A] swans [B] leaves
[C] ground-dwellers [D] fresh meat

(I) 8. When the giraffe runs, his neck _____.

[A] moves from side to side [B] is a lookout tower
[C] moves up and down [D] does not rock

LEVEL: 6

Because he looks like a fish, many people find it hard to believe that a porpoise is really a mammal. But porpoises are warm-blooded. They breathe air, bear their young alive and nurse their young. This animal has adjusted to the sea far better than any fish. He has more energy than a fish because his lungs supply his body with more oxygen than do a fish's gills. He must surface about once a minute, however, to breathe. Because the porpoise swims so swiftly and moves so well in the water, he is king of the sea. He competes with no one for food.

(D) 1. The porpoise is often called a fish because he _____.

[A] swims so well [B] looks like a fish
[C] is fast in the water [D] is warm-blooded

(V) 2. Another word for **adjusted** as it is used in this selection is _____.

[A] fixed [B] admired [C] respected [D] adapted

(I) 3. The porpoise tires _____ the fish.

[A] as quickly as [B] more easily than
[C] less easily than [D] in less time than

(G) 4. The article generally discusses the porpoise in relation to _____.

[A] his size [B] the sea [C] his strength [D] his young

(I) 5. **Fish** is to **gills** as **porpoise** is to _____.

[A] oxygen [B] breathes [C] mammals [D] lungs

(G) 6. An appropriate title for this selection would be _____.

[A] Mammals [B] King of the Sea
[C] Fishes of the Sea [D] A Porpoise and Its Young

(D) 7. The porpoise breathes _____.

[A] about once a minute [B] constantly
[C] underwater [D] as often as a fish

(V) 8. **Competes**, as it is used in this story means _____.

[A] contents [B] swims [C] races [D] contends

APPENDIX B

1 **STONEHENGE**

For many centuries people have wondered about Stonehenge. They have studied the large circle of huge stone pillars. Some stones still stand erect. But others lie on the ground where they fell hundreds of years ago. Scientists have suggested that Stonehenge was a religious temple. Or, that it was a device to keep track of time.

The word Stonehenge means the "hanging stones," and it is an appropriate name. Some of the stone pillars still stand, just as they did 4,000 years ago. Across the tops of a few of the pillars, connecting to one another, are smaller stones that seem to "hang" in space.

Stonehenge stands on a rise in a rolling plain near Salisbury, England. The outer ring of stones at Stonehenge was made of 30 massive pillars. Some of them weigh up to 40 tons. These stones probably came from a quarry which is located 25 miles away. They had to be hauled over this distance by the people who built Stonehenge. They had to be cut into shape and set into place. After that, the smaller stones, called lintels, were set on top of them. Within the main ring of pillars at Stonehenge is another ring of smaller stones. These pillars weight about 5 tons each. They are called bluestones because of their coloration. The closest quarry for stones like these is about 250 miles from the Salisbury Plain.

Stonehenge began as a large, circular ditch, built about 1900 B.C. This ditch is about 300 feet in diameter. As the people dug, they piled the soil along one rim and so a mound was made. Fifty-six holes inside the mound were probably dug at the same time.

Two hundred years later, the ring of bluestones was built. It was near the center of the ditch and mound. Only a few of these stones now stand; most have fallen over or have been removed. A broad avenue, now a slight depression in the land with mounds on either side, runs from Stonehenge across the Salisbury Plain. Some scientists think it was the main entrance and was built during this time period.

A hundred years or more went by before the large stone pillars were added, and their lintels set in place. Thus, at least 300 years were required to complete the "mystery" of stonehenge.

Reading Time_____ Comprehension Score_____ Words per Minute_____

Recalling Facts

1. Stonehenge may have functioned as a

   [A] fort.
   [B] temple.
   [C] village.

2. How many pillars made up the outer ring of stones?

   [A] 30
   [B] 15
   [C] 10

3. When was the first part of Stonehenge completed?

   [A] about 1600 B.C.
   [B] about 1900 A.D.
   [C] about 1900 B.C.

4. Name the type of stone that was used to build the inner ring of smaller pillars.

   [A] bluestone
   [B] granite
   [C] marble

5. What is an important part of Stonehenge besides the "hanging stones"?

   [A] a grove of trees
   [B] a ring-shaped ditch
   [C] a stone quarry

Understanding the Passage

6. From this selection we can conclude that

   [A] the purposes of Stonehenge are still not known.
   [B] Stonehenge was unimportant to its builders.
   [C] Stonehenge is no longer an object of curiosity.

7. Choose the best title for this article.

   [A] Different Types of Stone in Great Britain
   [B] A Mystery in Stone
   [C] Prehistoric People of Great Britain

8. Stonehenge was probably built

   [A] with iron tools.
   [B] by hundreds of people.
   [C] within a period of a few years.

9. Which ring of stones supports the lintels?

   [A] the outer ring
   [B] the inner ring
   [C] the third ring

10. What is another term for lintel?

    [A] pillar
    [B] column
    [C] "hanging stone"

12 THE ROMANTIC CENTER

Fireplaces tend to affect people in a strange way. They seem to have a romance all their own. Well, they should. Fireplaces were once the center of family life. When the West was being settled, the fireplace was the only energy source in the home. It provided heat, light, and cooking facilities. We have all heard the tale of Abe Lincoln being born in a log cabin. He is said to have studied his law books in front of the open fire. He did his writing on the back of the fireplace shovel.

In large colonial homes, there were a number of fireplaces. There would be one in the living room and another in the library. Often, there would be a fireplace in each bedroom. People burned logs in the open fireplace because logs were the only fuel that was around. Later, modern fireplaces burned "gas logs." These were artificial logs that were really gas outlets. Many of these are still around today.

As homes began to be built with heating furnaces, fireplaces started to disappear. While a few homes still had them, they were more for show than anything else. In fact, some of the fireplaces in today's homes are not really fireplaces at all. That is, they do not have hearths or chimneys or dampers or other things that a fireplace needs. It would be quite dangerous to build a real fire in one of these.

But today, fireplaces have begun to make a strong comeback. Part of this is due to the high cost of fuel and energy. People are using them more and more. With this new use, there is a need for people to learn the rules of fireplace safety.

There are some things we should all know about open fires in the home. For example, did you know that sparks can leap from an open fire? These sparks can ignite anything in the room that will burn. This is why a screen made of wire or special glass should be placed across the fireplace.

If charcoal is burned in a poorly vented fireplace, deadly gases could be released into the room. Logs you buy at the store are made of sawdust and wax. These should be handled differently from natural logs. They should be burned one at a time and not stacked.

Reading Time_____ Comprehension Score_____ Words per Minute_____

Recalling Facts

1. Fireplaces were once the center of

   [A] early education.
   [B] family life.
   [C] social gatherings.

2. Later on in time, modern fireplaces burned

   [A] dried leaves.
   [B] gas logs.
   [C] seasoned wood.

3. Today, fireplaces have made a strong comeback because of the high cost of

   [A] fuel.
   [B] groceries.
   [C] houses.

4. Charcoal can be a dangerous fuel because it

   [A] does not burn.
   [B] shoots off sparks.
   [C] gives off deadly gases.

5. Logs you buy in the store are made of

   [A] charcoal and wood.
   [B] newspaper and oil.
   [C] sawdust and wax.

Understanding the Passage

6. Fireplaces were

   [A] important to the colonists.
   [B] invented by the English.
   [C] never used in Europe.

7. It was unusual for a large Colonial house to

   [A] be built with one central fireplace.
   [B] have fireplaces for heating.
   [C] have a wood-burning stove.

8. Some of the fireplaces in today's homes are used for

   [A] cooking.
   [B] decoration.
   [C] storage.

9. Why is it good to use a fireplace screen?

   [A] It adds decoration to the fireplace.
   [B] It holds logs in their proper place.
   [C] It prevents sparks from leaving the fireplace.

10. If not used properly, a fireplace can be

    [A] dangerous.
    [B] sturdy.
    [C] untidy.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Reading Strategies

1. When you encounter an unknown word, what do you do to obtain the meaning?

2. When you realize you have not understood or don't remember, what do you do?

3. What are some of the ways you reread to gain an understanding of the passage?

4. What is the difference between skimming, scanning, and rereading?

5. What comparisons do you make between your experience and knowledge and the subject of the passage?

6. What are some of the ways you predict what will happen next?

7. In what ways do you use what you know about a topic with the information in the passage?

8. To what extent do you use imagery?

APPENDIX D

TIME FRAME

Proposed Time Line for PPIRC Program

Week One	Pre-test students in areas of reading comprehension, speed, and cognitive awareness. Follow by 1-10 rating. Following four days give four twenty-minute speed reading drills.
Week Two and Seven	Administer ten five-minute sessions using a series stressing content area reading under timed conditions.
Week Three and Eight	Researcher stresses practice in test-taking strategies such as reading the question first, elimination in multiple choice, and choosing the best answer. Ten ten-minute sessions.
Week Four and Nine	Administer ten ten-minute sessions stressing identifying vocabulary, using context clues, cloze reading passages, and questions following passages.
Week Five and Ten	Administer ten twenty-minute activity sessions focusing on bubbling test answers (transferring information).
Week Six	Mid-Point modifications, as needed.
Week Six and Eleven	Using the newspaper to practice content reading followed up with students writing and answering higher and lower level questions.

Week Twelve	Four five-minute "speed reading" drill sessions. Posttesting using all instruments used as pretests.

APPENDIX E

PROGRESS GRAPH

TIMED READING LESSONS

Directions: Write your comprehension score in the box under the selection number. Then put an X on the line above each box to show reading time and words-per-minute reading rate.

Reading Time										Words Per Minute
:10										2400
:20										1200
:30										800
:40										600
:50										480
1:00										400
1:10										345
1:20										300
1:30										265
1:40										240
1:50										220
2:00										200
2:10										185
2:20										170
2:30										160
2:40										150
2:50										140
3:00										135
3:10										125
3:20										120
Selection	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		

Score _____